

November 22, 1999

Guidance to County Commissions on Allocating California Children and Family Act (Proposition 10) Funding

This advisory is a companion to the Guidelines: A Resource for Development of Proposition 10 Strategic Plans issued by the California Children and Families Commission in September. It is intended to help county commissions look ahead to the local funding decisions they will confront once they have filed their strategic plans.

Funding in the context of the strategic planning process

The Guidelines offer extensive advice to county commissions on how to develop a strategic plan that will support the three central outcomes that Proposition 10 seeks:

- improved family functioning: strong families
- improved child development: children learning and ready for school
- improved child health: healthy children

Each county commission will articulate these goals and develop strategies to meet them in its own way. A strong strategic plan that is based on the county's unique assets and needs and that leads to specific measurable outcomes through an effective plan of action can and should serve as the framework for commissions' subsequent funding decisions. Proposition 10 is not solely about funding direct services (it does not provide enough funding to meet all such needs) but to the extent that it is used for direct services, funding should go to those programs and activities that are essential to the commission's over-all objectives for young children and that are known to be effective. At the same time, to ensure that services for children are delivered in the most effective way, county commissions will also need to allocate funding for coordination, staff development, evaluation, new information systems, education campaigns, or other activities needed to build integrated, comprehensive, and effective systems and to educate the public. Some of these may be entirely new activities for the county.

To ensure that their strategy for young children is sustainable for the long term, county commissions are encouraged to take advantage of Proposition 10's uniqueness as a funding source. Because Proposition 10 funding in most counties will not be sufficient to meet all of young children's needs, and because Proposition 10 itself is likely to be a declining funding source over time, county commissions will want to optimize the opportunity that it offers now. Commissions may wish to:

- Research and assemble a resource base of other potential and current funding sources for early childhood development in order to identify gaps where Proposition 10 funding is most needed.
- If necessary, devote some Proposition 10 funding to the development of blended funding strategies across programs and departments for better fiscal efficiency and sustainability over the long haul.

- Use Proposition 10 funding to support those programs and activities for which no other resource can be used.
- To the extent possible, use Proposition 10 funding to draw down state or federal matching funds or to attract private contributions.
- Plan to reinvest any savings generated by the investment of Proposition 10 funds in early childhood programs.

A budget, showing estimated allocations to the various program components that support the commission's goals for early childhood development, is an important component of the strategic plan.

A suggested process for allocating funds to providers

As commissions begin the process of deciding which specific organizations and programs to fund, they may find that the public or providers expect them, in the interests of equity, to make funding available equally across the possible range of geographic or demographic communities, public or non-profit providers, or program types. While such distributive considerations are important and will need to be addressed, to the extent possible they should come into play only after potential funding choices have been verified as effective in supporting the goals of the strategic plan.

To do this, county commissions will find it essential to clarify their goals as precisely as possible, and then to determine those supporting activities and programs for which providers should be invited to submit a proposal. In some instances where a specific service is being sought to meet a key objective and there is only one natural provider in the community, it may be possible to allocate funding on a sole source basis. Where there are several potential providers, however, commissions are strongly encouraged to develop and issue one or more Requests for Proposals (RFPs), depending on how many separate funding needs they have established. Through the RFP process, county commissions can:

- make clear to the community of providers the specific funding priorities (e.g., for targeted geographical and/or demographic communities, specific types of support or intervention, particular systemic reforms, etc.) that the county commission has articulated in order to reach its goals for young children
- proactively solicit fresh thinking where the commission has determined that an entirely new program or approach is needed
- create a level playing field; select among a range of applicants according to public, uniform criteria
- balance funding across the range of qualified programs needed to meet the goals of the strategic plan .

Once funding is allocated, county commissions are encouraged to structure their contracts with providers in a way that links their performance to the objectives of the strategic plan, i.e., by incorporating benchmarks for child outcomes and/or interagency linkages to be achieved and a process for measuring them at certain intervals.

Principles and criteria for allocation

The following principles can help local decisionmakers to ensure that their funding decisions will support the purposes they have outlined in their strategic plan. County commissions may also find some of the questions below useful as a starting point for development of criteria to include in their RFPs.

1. Create strategic impact. Fund programs and activities that

- **support the goals in your strategic plan**
- **show evidence of effectiveness**
- **need Proposition 10 funding in order to meet your goals.**

a) Does the program or activity fulfill the purposes of your strategic plan? I.e., does it respond to the known needs of your community's Proposition 10 population, as established in your community assessment? Is the program or activity necessary to achieve the results you've identified in your strategic plan, especially for specific ethnic groups, language minorities, and special needs children and families?

b) What is your evidence that the program is or will be effective in meeting your goals? Is the program based on current research? Has it been evaluated? If the program would be new to your community, has it been implemented in a community similar to yours, so that it's reasonable to assume that similar outcomes could be achieved in your setting?

c) Does the program/activity target the particular group or groups you've identified as needing it the most?

d) Does the program or activity improve the balance of services and activities in your community between prevention/asset development and intervention?

e) If the program involves direct service, is it developmentally appropriate? Does it provide support for growth, or intervention in the case of difficulty, at the earliest and/or most appropriate time?

f) Is Proposition 10 funding required in order for this program or activity to be effective toward your goals?

2. Promote inclusion. Fund programs or activities that

- **are responsive to the diverse needs of members of your community**
- **have been shaped by community input.**

a) Is the program sensitive to and respectful of different cultural beliefs and practices within your community?

- b) Would the program effectively serve special needs children and families?
- c) Have service recipients been involved in developing the program, its processes or products?
- d) Would inclusion of this program or activity in your Proposition 10 funding plan make the plan as a whole more responsive to diverse sectors of your community?

3. Move toward service integration. Fund programs and activities that

- **reduce fragmentation of existing services**
- **make services more accessible and comprehensive**
- **support shared decisionmaking and shared resources among partners who need each other in order to succeed**

- a) Does the program fill a gap in existing resources within the county, or supplement and strengthen existing resources, as opposed to creating duplication or fragmentation?
- b) Does the program or activity support shared accountability among those responsible for the well-being of children in your community?
- c) Will the program or activity help to integrate existing services for young children in your community at the neighborhood level, making them more comprehensive and accessible?
- d) Does the program or activity support service providers and staffs to function in a more flexible and multidisciplinary way?
- e) Are there ways to maximize the advantage of Proposition 10 funding for this program or activity through blended funding or leverage of other (e.g., matching) funds?

(For additional guidance on service integration, please refer to the discussion in the Guidelines, especially pp. 30—31.)

4. Build on strengths/build capacity. Fund programs and activities that

- **take advantage of organizational and neighborhood assets**
- **help participants to further develop their capacities**

- a) Does the program or activity identify and enhance existing community strengths?
- b) Will the program or activity help to build capacity in an underserved area by bringing in new providers or by working with providers already there to increase their effectiveness?